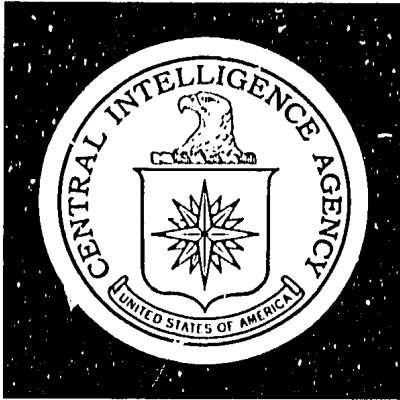


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OFFICE OF
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MEMORANDUM

Turkey in Trouble

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12 July 1971

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
OFFICE OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES

12 July 1971

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Turkey in Trouble*

NOTE

An NIE on Turkey is scheduled for October/November. This memorandum is an interim assessment of recent developments and present prospects.

* * * * *

I. THE CURRENT SCENE

1. Disturbed at the failure of the Justice Party (JP) regime to provide what they considered effective government, the senior Turkish generals forced Prime Minister Suleyman Demirel to resign in March 1971. The generals did not step directly into Demirel's shoes. Instead they backed Nihat Erim, an experienced and generally respected member of the Republican Peoples Party (RPP), in

* This memorandum was prepared by the Office of National Estimates and coordinated within CIA.

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forming a new civilian government. Erim resigned from his party and assembled a largely non-representative Cabinet with only token participation from the major political parties. While Erim's government depends on the military establishment in the background, it operates according to the forms of parliamentary procedure and is more than a mere puppet of the generals.

2. Erim continues to be beset by many of the problems that brought Demirel to grief. His regime faces an increasingly fragmented parliament in which no political party now enjoys a majority. In April, persistent urban terrorism obliged Erim to clamp martial law on Turkey's largest cities and some other parts of the country. Fears of Kurdish separatism, fanned by the agitation of the Turkish Labor Party (TLP), continue to concern the military establishment. And Erim still has to assure that Turkey carries through effectively in its commitment to end opium production. These events raise the question of whether Turkey can, under its present system or anything like it, meet its mounting challenges.

II. PROBLEMS

A. Parliamentary Paralysis

3. Turkey's dramatic difficulties reflect deep problems in society. The parliamentary process has encountered growing

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challenges in recent years, and the very future of the democratic system is at stake. Believing the centralization of power in a unicameral parliament responsible for the excesses of the Menderes decade of the 1950s, the framers of the 1961 Constitution elaborated an extensive set of checks and balances. The new electoral law introduced proportional representation which effectively limited the size of the JP majority and assured splinter parties representation. Even more important, the Constitution explicitly confirmed the military establishment's right to address political issues.

4. As intended, these constraints curtailed the government's freedom of action. Demirel, Prime Minister from 1965 to 1971, was by nature a conciliator rather than a leader. Though he enjoyed substantial support in rural areas, he was reluctant to use his parliamentary majority to enact controversial legislation opposed by the RPP, which presumed to speak for the bulk of the educated elite. Demirel's freedom of action was further constricted after revolt within the JP threatened the parliamentary majority his party had won in the 1969 elections. Thus for a year before the top generals finally forced him to resign in March 1971, the government had limped along, showing its muscle only by such acts as the devaluation of August 1970, which did not depend directly on parliamentary approval. This style of rule fed

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dissatisfaction with the constitutional arrangements and stimulated yearning for more decisive government.

5. Discontent is strongest among educated elements, most of whom still favor the elitist, reformist, semi-authoritarian approach inherited from the Ataturk era. These elements -- traditionally grouped around the RPP -- have never seen their party win a freely contested election. While the RPP leaders still profess confidence that the masses will come to support their reformist approach, some former party members have already abandoned hope in the electoral process and have been urging another military takeover.* RPP leader Inonu, 86-year old veteran of the establishment of the Turkish Republic, categorically opposes such military intervention. But the failure of the RPP to improve its position at the polls has weakened the thrust of his argument.

6. In Turkey, the military establishment traditionally identifies with the reformist elite. The military career has offered rural elements the educational opportunities they needed to achieve status in society. And having shared power with the reformist elite for some 30 years prior to 1950, the top ranks

* Some of the founders of Devrim (Revolution), a periodical promoting a military takeover, were former members of the RPP. Devrim was closed indefinitely by the martial law authorities in May 1971.

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of the officer corps, at least, appear generally to share the authoritarian, statist outlook inherited from Ataturk. No simple label adequately describes their approach. But they take seriously their role as protectors of the regime, not only from external enemies but also from disruptive domestic elements, particularly any who call for an assault on the system. The generals want an orderly society in which public service is set as the highest good, with its rewards in wealth and power. Private enterprise and the accumulation of wealth through trade or industry rank at the bottom of their value system.

7. Yet while the officer corps has been notably unhappy with the deterioration of public order, the taint of speculation by civilian politicians, and the failure to enact significant social reforms, the senior generals are aware of the drawbacks in ruling Turkey through the armed forces and may even recognize their own limitations of experience with the problems of civil rule. Hence, though the generals did concert to oust Demirel in the interests of installing more forceful leadership, they have shown themselves genuinely reluctant to take power directly.

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B. Urban Terrorism

8. The proximate cause of the installation of the Erim government was the rise of politically motivated violence toward the end of 1970. Crimes of violence are common enough in Turkey, but bank robberies, murder, kidnapping, and arson for political ends have been virtually unknown. Moreover, though the police in the Menderes era had been discredited for partisan application of the law, the armed forces enjoyed a wide reputation for impartiality that commanded respect throughout Turkish society. Thus the rise of an "urban guerrilla" movement, inspired by the teachings of Che Guevara, Regis Debray and Carlos Marighella which defied the army, loomed as a totally new and disturbing phenomenon.

9. We cannot yet draw a clear profile of the tiny band of urban terrorists. But from the scattered evidence available, it is apparent that they are products of the Turkish educational system. Education has been the hallmark of the reformist elite in Turkey, the pathway to status and power. Since the Republic, Turkish regimes have regarded the school as an essential agency for social reform and the ultimate means to consolidate gains achieved in the first instance by government fiat. In this

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context, adulation of the student as the guardian of reform has whetted the desire and expectation of those in universities to play a major part in ordering Turkey's destiny. Especially since the 1960 military takeover -- which came in the wake of university demonstrations -- students in Turkey have exaggerated their importance and power in society.

10. The rise of the radical student movement was a distinguishing mark of the 1960s. Student organizations first demanded reform of the antiquated university system, but soon branched out to demand wholesale changes in Turkey's domestic and foreign policy. Cries for educational reform initially met warm response outside university circles -- even Demirel acknowledged the justice of complaints against examination procedures, overcrowding of classes, and harsh student living conditions. But student demands for basic social reform aroused antipathy in some influential segments of the elite, including the JP, Turkey's largest political organization.

11. Student discontent drew impetus from a number of sources. On the one hand, the 1960s were a time of rapidly expanding higher education. Several new universities and a number of profit-oriented private higher educational institutions opened during this period. Vastly increased numbers of graduates were turned out. But although

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Turkey's economy was expanding by an average of about six to seven percent a year after the mid-1960s, there was a dearth of jobs offering suitable status and rewards to the rapidly swelling ranks of recent graduates. Traditional prejudices against private enterprise still prevailed widely among the student population. Yet the government bureaucracy, customarily the employer of preference for university graduates, was unable to absorb these growing numbers of educated people. While the dimensions of this problem have not become as critical as in some other underdeveloped countries, the difficulty in finding employment of acceptable status has provided a fertile field for dissidence.

12. Since 1960 as well the universities have been the scene of wide-ranging ideological debate. Particularly after the Cyprus crisis of mid-1964 showed that US and Turkish interests were not entirely congruent, some of the younger professors began to sow suspicion of Western capitalism. It became stylish in Turkish universities to explain Turkey's backwardness as the result of Western, and particularly US, economic imperialism. From this it was only a short step to believe that the US was effectively intervening in Turkish affairs to keep "progressive" elements from power. Under the influence of these views, some of the more activist

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students turned to explore the "classics of Marxism-Leninism" and then branched out to Maoism and the revolutionary approach of the Cubans, North Vietnamese, Latin American urban guerrillas and the more extreme Arab fedayeen. Thanks to the permissive atmosphere of the 1960s in Turkey, translations and commentary on these subjects were for the first time readily available in quantity. And the universities, with their autonomy and relative immunity from ordinary police regulations, became a haven for a small number of radical protestors.

13. No doubt the revolutionary student movement was influenced to some degree by factors outside Turkey. The example of the French students in challenging de Gaulle in mid-1968 clearly encouraged their Turkish counterparts to pursue an activist course. Turkish students have followed closely events in American universities.

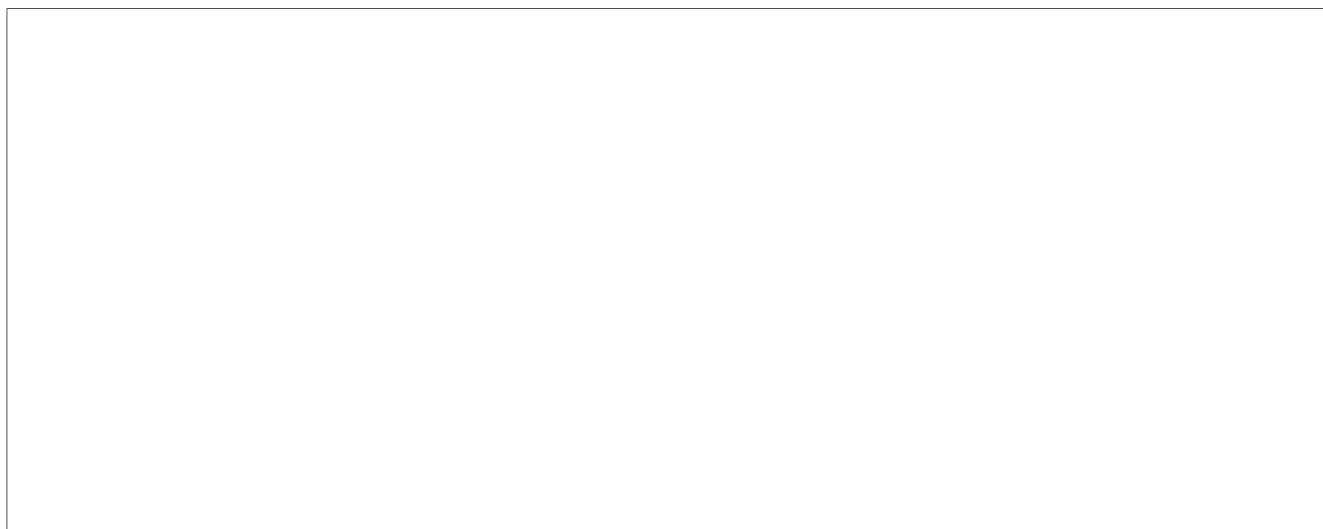
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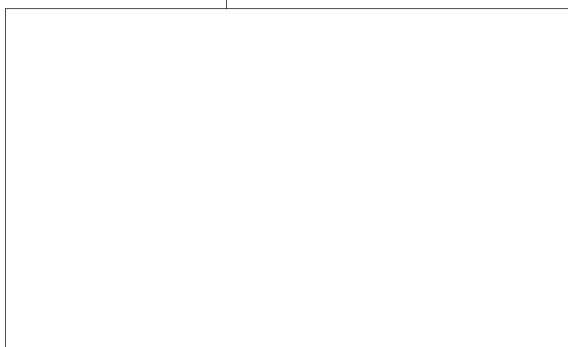
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15. By the late 1960s a hard core of student activists was drawn increasingly to violence to express its extremist point of view. But these tactics rapidly eroded the sympathy the earlier demands for university reform had engendered among much of the Turkish elite. The senior officer corps, which may be receptive to the argument that Turkey needs more or less radical social reform, obviously feels itself directly challenged by the urban terrorists.

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there is clearly general revulsion against tactics such as the kidnapping-murder of the Israeli Consul General. And from the rising tide of informers against the urban

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guerrilla movement, it seems apparent that there are few elements in Turkish society that now support this movement.

16. Although the Turkish government attributes the urban guerrilla movement to a tiny coterie of extreme leftists, the Ankara regime has rounded up numerous professors, writers, and journalists who might in some way have inspired lawlessness.* The authorities have banned some 100 books, newspapers, and periodicals -- from do-it-yourself instructions on guerrilla war to the strategy of anti-imperialist war in Turkey. Among those singled out for prosecution by the martial law command have been leaders of Turkey's only socialist party, the TLP.

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Indeed, the martial law commanders have now silenced much of the extreme left in Turkey, closing press outlets that reflected its strident views.

* Some of these have now been released. Although the Erim government has also declaimed frequently about the dangers of the radical right, it has not arrested those of this persuasion.

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C. Kurdish Separatism

17. A perennial problem which was used as an excuse for imposition of the martial law regime has been that of Kurdish separatism. The Kurds, who form a heavy majority in almost all the provinces of southeastern Turkey, number perhaps 3-4 million of the some 35 million people in the country as a whole. The areas they inhabit are the least developed and least modernized section of Turkey, lagging far behind the western regions in standard of living, in industrialization, in emancipation from traditional mores and social structure, or in any other accoutrements of modernity. Development expenditures by the central government also have been less in these regions than elsewhere in Turkey; and the economic backwardness of the area has enhanced the differences between the Kurds and the Turkish majority.

18. Ankara governments have generally adopted a harsh policy toward evidences of Kurdish aspirations for political autonomy. Suspected Kurdish nationalist agitators have regularly been hailed into court and sentenced to lengthy jail terms. Yet at least on the cultural level, Kurdish poets and writers have continued to agitate for autonomy. The TLP has publicly raised the issue of discrimination against the Kurds in eastern Turkey. Though precise

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statistics are unavailable, it also seems that Kurds have been disproportionately drawn into the radical leftist student movement to express their rebellion. The martial law authorities claim to have uncovered concrete evidence of plotting among Kurds in eastern Turkey to break off to form an independent state in conjunction with Mullah Mustafa Barzani in northern Iraq; Ankara has announced the discovery of sufficient weapons cached to arm more than a regiment with rifles, machine guns, and submachine guns.

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The Kurds, split as they are into rival, competing tribal agglomerations, have never displayed a cohesive front to the outside world, even during their rebellions in the 1920s and 1930s. Much as some groups in Turkey may admire Barzani, others certainly nourish long-standing grievances against him. Thus it seems unlikely that there was any plan for a general rising by the Turkish Kurds to unite with their Iraqi confreres. Arms smuggling is endemic among the Kurds, who traditionally have carried guns; the weapons uncovered by the security forces may have been largely intended for sale to Iraqi Kurds. In any event, given the savage suppression of past Kurdish revolts in Turkey, the lightly armed Kurds could hardly hope to confront the well-armed and determined Turkish army.

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III. PROSPECTS

20. Nihat Erim does not view his regime as an interim expedient to carry out limited reforms and retire gracefully as soon as possible. He is ambitious and undoubtedly sees an opportunity to build a sufficient power base to remain in contention for the position of top leadership in Turkey for some time to come. Thus, unless pushed out by the military establishment, Erim will probably try to serve out the full parliamentary term ending in October 1973. By that point he might hope to have neutralized the left wing of the RPP, his old party, so that he could at least return to the fold with a strong claim to leadership of the party.

21. The problem of restructuring parliament to avoid the paralysis of the past and to exclude "undesirable" elements will be hard to solve. The reformist elite, typified by Erim, wishes to amend the election law, and if necessary the Constitution, to limit the franchise in some way to insure that the RPP can win elections. There is no obvious change that would offer assurance of achieving this end. For example, it is doubtful that even a radical measure restricting the franchise to those who are literate or have at least primary education would

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have the effect of reducing the relative majority of JP votes, as some of the most backward areas have provided a significant proportion of RPP votes in the past. Naturally, any blatantly partisan move would fracture the coalition support Erim's government now enjoys and lead to its immediate downfall.

22. Yet until this conundrum is solved, the military establishment will probably refuse to back very far out of its present position of overseeing the government's every move. If the conspicuous role now played by the generals continues for a prolonged period, the concept of the military establishment sharing power openly with the civilians may become entrenched. In this event, democratic practices in Turkey would be tenuous at best. The resulting strains and frustrations could lead to renewed military upheavals and to outright abandonment of even a facade of democratic procedure.

23. This poses a cruel dilemma for the JP. Unless provoked by an openly partisan act of the Erim government, Demirel and his colleagues are probably prepared to wait until the 1973 elections before making another bid for power. If elections are not scheduled by the normal 1973 date, the JP will undoubtedly grow restive and be tempted to withdraw cooperation from the regime. There is little that the JP can do, however, to press effectively for elections, as any resistance would probably

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strengthen the determination of the military to keep its commanding role. In fact, were the JP to withdraw its support from the Erim government, it would create a political crisis which could bring civilian rule to an end.

24. The urban guerrilla movement is probably a transient phenomenon. The military leadership is willing to use all necessary force to crush it. Moreover, its reservoirs of sympathy have dried up outside of a few committed extremists on the left. Erim is moving to amend the Constitution to bring the universities to heel by curtailing their immunities, especially to normal police procedures. These changes would make it extremely difficult for the terrorist movement to revive, even if martial law is relaxed. Any effort to organize guerrilla activity in rural areas would be even more difficult to sustain.

25. Nonetheless, repression is not apt to end discontent in the universities. The strains in the educational system are not susceptible to easy solution. It will be difficult to adapt the present university system to produce graduates that fit existing needs. Nor is it likely that any early consensus will be reached on the role of the university graduate in society. Hence, if freedom of expression is restored, the universities are likely again to become a focal point of dissent, though probably not of a violent sort.

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26. In any event, the scope of political debate is likely to be restricted for some time to come. The present court case against the TLP may lead to its abolition. Already for practical purposes it has ceased to operate. Other steps may be taken to close parties on the extremes of left and right. Contrary to the hopes of many on the extreme left, the officers have shown no signs of balking at this course.

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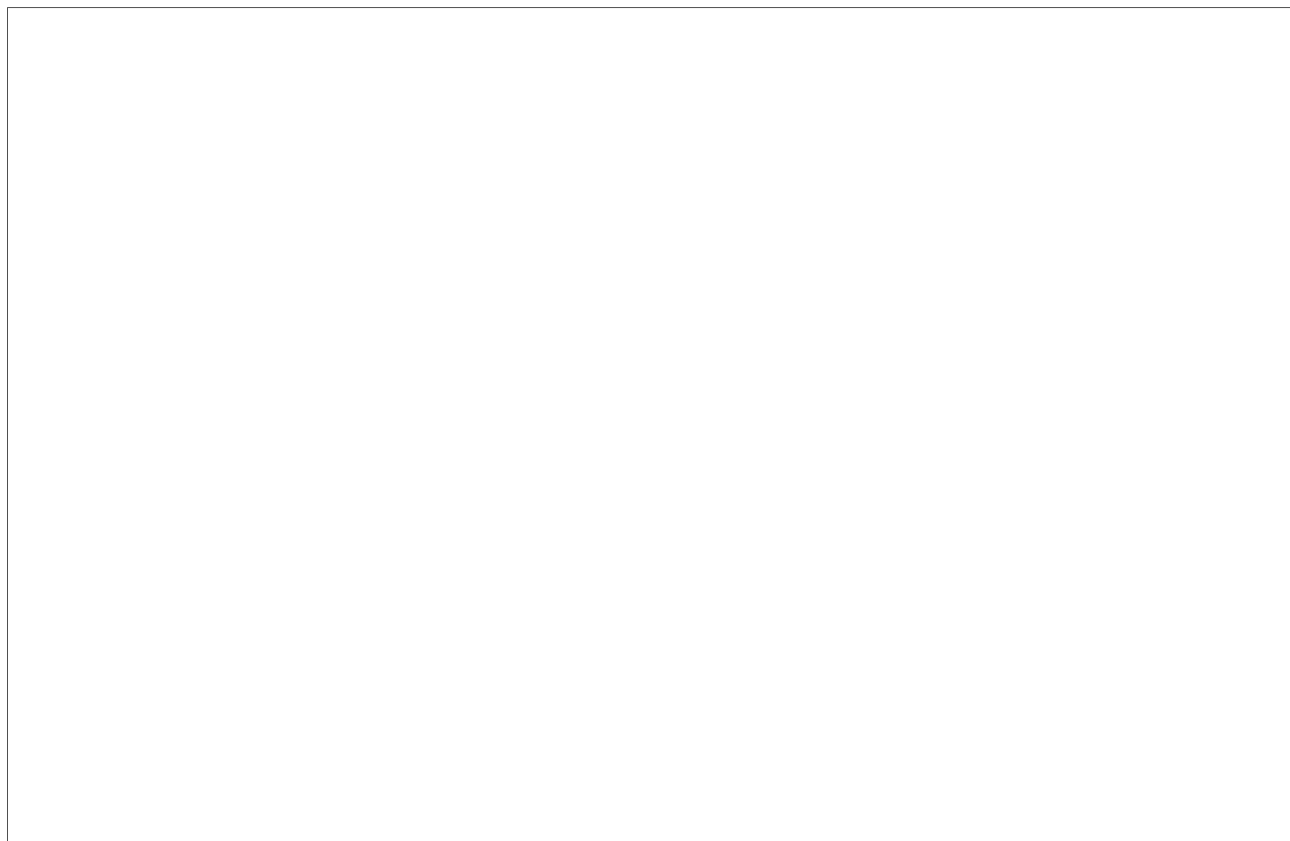
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29. There will also be an impact on government-to-government relations. Turkey and the US have been engaged in negotiating subsidiary implementing agreements for activities and facilities operated under the Defense Cooperation Agreement (DCA) of July 1969. These implementing accords were to be completed by July 1970; thus far none has been concluded. The essential sticking point has been the insistence of the Turkish military establishment on regaining the concessions made by the civilian authorities in the DCA. The soldiers are adamant in their desire to gain explicit authority to control the day-to-day operations of US facilities in Turkey.

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With the rise of military assertiveness in Turkey, therefore, the ability of the Erim government to induce the soldiers to back down is limited.

The Opium Issue

30. Prime Minister Erim has moved in the matter of opium much more vigorously and decisively than his predecessors. In part, this is because the Erim government, unlike the popularly elected regime that preceded it, did not depend on the votes of villagers, particularly in the provinces most affected by restrictions on opium production. Partly too, Erim himself by nature and experience is especially sensitive to the foreign image of his regime. Deputy Prime Minister Atilla Karaosmanoglu, who is in charge of the government's opium program, has recently returned from a tour with the World Bank in Washington where he gained personal understanding of the American concern. Hence, after very tough bargaining with senior US officials, Erim agreed to issue a decree on June 30 banning all poppy cultivation after the coming crop year.

31. Though this agreement is a giant step toward removing a major bone of contention in Turkish relations with the US, nonetheless some of its aspects may cause difficulties in the

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future. The effort to redirect opium growers to other crops is bound to be a long one -- considerably longer than the present US commitment for assistance. Erim's emphasis on "friendship" as a major quid pro quo and his desire for a US agricultural program in Turkey comparable to the highly successful highway venture of the 1950s indicate that expectations for substantial and continuing economic aid beyond the opium question may be hard for the US to meet. Thus eventually when present restrictions on the press are eased, the US may find itself criticized from various quarters for its pressures to eliminate opium production in Turkey. The temptation to attack the US on this issue will be all the greater if indications soon appear that opium growers elsewhere are increasing their production.

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